

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2080

UNCLAS ATHENS 7629

EO 11652 NA

TAGS: CASC, CGEN, GR,

SUBJ: PROTECTIVE CONSULAR SERVICES

REF: STATE 189686

1. IN RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT'S REFTEL, I HAVE, TOGETHER WITH THE CONSUL GENERAL AND THE CHIEF OF THE SPECIAL CONSULAR SERVICES UNIT, CONDUCTED A THOROUGH REVIEW AND EXAMINATION OF THE EMBASSY'S WELFARE AND PROTECTION UNIT. THIS REVIEW INCLUDED ALL ASPECTS OF THE WELFARE AND PROTECTION FACET OF CONSULAR SERVICES, I.E. ARRESTS, DETENTION AND TRIALS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS, THE PRISON VISITATION PROGRAM, DEATHS AND ESTATES, ILLNESSES AND ACCIDENTS, FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, WHEREABOUTS OF MISSING AMERICANS, PROTECTION OF PROPERTY, REPORTS OF LOSS OF THEFT, FACILITATIVE AND INFORMATION ASSISTANCE, CORRESPONDENCE PROCEDURE, AND UNIT MANAGEMENT.

2. IN MY ESTIMATION, THE CONDUCT OF WELFARE AND PROTECTION ACTIVITIES AT THIS POST LOCATED IN A MAJOR TOURIST COUNTRY, IS EXCEPTIONALLY EFFECTIVE, AMERICAN CITIZENS WITH PROBLEMS, MAJOR OR MINOR, ARE DEALT WITH SYMPATHETICALLY AND EFFECTIVELY. THE OFFICERS AND LOCAL EMPLOYEES ARE EXPERIENCED, SENSITIVE TO THE PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY AMERICAN CITIZENS LIVING OR TRAVELING ABROAD, AWARE OF THE CURRENT ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE CONDUCT OF THEIR PROFESSION SERVICES AND MOST IMPORTANT, IMBUED WITH A SPIRIT OF PUBLIC SERVICE WHICH IS UNCLASSIFIED

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ORIENTED TO SOLVING HUMAN PROBLEMS WITH SENSITIVITY, INGENUITY AND TACT. IN SUBSTANTIATION AND RECOGNITION OF THEIR FINE PERFORMANCE WITHIN THE PAST YEAR, THE UNIT AS A WHOLE AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE UNIT HAVE RECEIVED CITATIONS FOR MERITORIOUS PERFORMANCE. NUMEROUS LETTERS OF APPRECIATION HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BOTH BY THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT, COMMENDING THE UNIT AND INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEES

FOR THEIR SYMPATHETIC ASSISTANCE. DESPITE CURRENT ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE ALLEGED INDIFFERENCE OF SOME EMBASSIES TO THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE FUNCTION, THIS EMBASSY DOES NOT HAVE A SINGLE DOCUMENTED COMPLAINT REGARDING PROTECTION AND WELFARE SERVICE OF THE LACK OF IT FOR AT LEAST THE PAST TWO YEARS.

3. ALTHOUGH THE WORKLOAD IN THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE AREA HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, ADDITIONAL PERSONAL RESOURCES HAVE NOT BEEN REQUESTED FROM DEPARTMENT SINCE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND REORGANIZATION PROVIDED RESOURCES, AND SPACE HAVE BEEN ABLE UP TO NOW ADEQUATELY TO COPE WITH THE DRAMATICALLY INCREASED WORKLOAD. IN ADDITION, EXTENSIVE REFURBISHING OF THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE UNIT, INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE WORK AREAS, PROVISION OF FULL CARPETING, AND RELOCATION OF OFFICE SPACE TO PERMIT MORE EFFICIENT FLOW OF PEOPLE, HAS MEANT A MORE CONGENIAL, PRIVATE, AND EFFECTIVE VENUE FOR THIS FUNCTION. THE EMBASSY HAS ASSIGNED AN EXTRA OFFICER TO THE UNIT FOR THE PEAK SUMMER PERIOD AND ALL OFFICERS CURRENTLY WORKING WITH WELFARE AND PROTECTION, INCLUDING THE EXTRA OFFICER, ARE LANGUAGE OFFICERS WITH A THREE/THREE OR ABOVE RATING IN GREEK. THIS ALLOWS MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS IN WORKING CONTACTS WITH THE GREEK AUTHORITIES. THESE CONTACTS ARE ALSO REINFORCED BOTH AT THE WORKING AND HIGHER LEVEL BY THE CONSUL GENERAL WHO PLAYS AN ACTIVE ROLE IN OVERSEEING THE OPERATION OF THE UNIT, MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE CONTACTS, AND WHERE THE OCCASION WARRANTS, REPRESENTING

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THE INTERESTS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS TO HIGHER GREEK GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE FORMER AMBASSADOR HAD DISCUSSED TWO CASES INVOLVING AMERICAN CITIZEN PRISONERS WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. THE CONSUL GENERAL AND I WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE WELFARE AND PROTECTION FUNCTION TO DETERMINE WHEN AND IF ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL OR OTHER RESOURCES WILL BE REQUIRED.

4. I AM WELL SATISFIED WITH THE PROVISION OF WELFARE AND PROTECTION SERVICES AFFAIRS IN THE DEPARTMENT IS ALSO AWARE OF THE FINE JOB BEING DONE BY THIS UNIT IN ATHENS.

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